

Commissioner's Weekly Wrap Up

DCS Communications Office

October 1, 2004

The Week Ahead

Saturday, October 1

Commissioner Miller will address the Tennessee Foster Parent Conference at Airport Marriott Hotel in Nashville.

Monday, October 4

Commissioner Miller will attend Governor Bredesen's Cabinet meeting at the Capitol.

Tuesday, October 5

The Commissioner will speak to a graduate class at the Vanderbilt University Owen School of Business about change management.

Thursday, October 7

Commissioner Miller will be present for the official kick off of the Tennessee Child Welfare Training Center at Middle Tennessee University and the announcement of the university's acquisition of the contract to oversee the 13-member university consortium effort to provide training for DCS employees.

Staff Contact: Andrea Turner, andrea.turner@state.tn.us, or (615) 418-3703 cell.

Communications Update

New PIO Joins DCS

K. Danielle Edwards has been hired as public information officer in the Office of Communications. A graduate of Tennessee State University, Danielle has more than four years experience as a writer and print journalist, and has worked at CNN in Atlanta, Georgia; the *Nashville Banner* and *The Rake* in Nashville, Tennessee; and *The Herald Sun*, in Durham, North Carolina. Danielle is scheduled to start at DCS on October 12. Please make her feel welcome!

Contact Information

Communications Director Andrea Turner can be reached at 615/532-5645 (office number) and 615/418-3703 (cell and after-hours number).

Attitudes Rule!

Submitted by Debra Valentine, Inspector General

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude to me is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company.... a church.... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one thing we have, and that is our attitude...I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you...we are in charge of our attitudes!

-- Charles Swindell

Truly, Attitudes Rule! We can all agree that every one has them. Attitudes have no respect of person. It matters not what our age, race, gender, income bracket, religion, political persuasion, health, scholastic level, social status, weight, or length and texture of hair, if we are alive, we display attitudes. Recognize that, as Mr. Wendell indicates, the issue is not that we have them. The relevance to our lives, in general, and our work in DCS, specifically, is how we allow attitudes to represent us as we face daily challenges.

When we make home visits to unfamiliar and aesthetically deprived homes and neighborhoods, we might say to ourselves "It could have been me"! When entering these settings, it will be the attitude we wear that can make the difference in our ability to engage families in permanency efforts. By virtue of the child's assignment to state custody, we know the family is in crisis. We must remain cognizant of the fact that regardless of our own discomfort, these families also dislike the circumstances of their living arrangements, income and limited ability to care for or supervise their children. It is that supportive non-judgmental attitude we wear that can encourage the hope they seek.

The children we serve have no voice in their removal from environments we consider unsafe for them. They only understand that life, as they knew it has changed. It is the attitude we hold when we select alternative caregivers that marks the course of their futures. It is only a caring, responsible attitude toward placement that will make the difference in our selection of genuine caring. We make the decision between nurturing homes and foster parents, or a bed in a place where they stay with adults who are less responsible and less equipped to parent than those in the home from which they were removed. We must approach the provision of care for children in state custody with the same quality of consideration and diligence that we use to respond to the needs of children in our own families and those of our neighbors.

The children we serve have no control over the money that drives their care. They depend on us to make these critical decisions for them. Therefore, it is important that we demonstrate an attitude of accountability. We must approach our documentation requirements with an attitude of accountability. Our recordings drive the provision of services. If we do not accurately and completely record required forms, TNKIDS entries and service assessments, our children suffer.

Lastly, we are all significantly challenged by the often-negative recognition we receive. It is a fact of life the "we cannot please all of the people all of the time." However, we can do our best to perform our duties, to avoid repeating mistakes and to encourage fellow employees in crisis. We must maintain an attitude of respect and healthy pride. We must respect ourselves and remain accountable for our own behaviors, acknowledge the beauty of diversity, approach our duties with a sense of urgency, respect the integrity of teamwork, strengthen the quality of our skills and character, support positive change and, acknowledge that we (DCS) are on a "path to excellence" and a positive attitude is the vehicle to take us there. Even though we meet adversities, we are making great progress in developing and implementing strategies to keep children safe, to reunite and keep families intact and to restore communities.

CORE Leadership

**The following are minutes from the CORE Leadership Meeting that occurred on September 21, 2004.*

- The meeting began with a reading of the Basic Principles of Professional Behavior and the Ground Rules. Additionally, the need to have cell phones turned off was added to the Ground Rules. Tom reminded the group that the Basic Principles are items that we review weekly and that we, as a group, can recite them. However, he pointed out the need to believe in and embody those principles in all our interactions with others.
- Personnel Report, William Haynes
 - Whenever a person leaves the agency, it leaves a big hole in that department. The Personnel Department currently has some vacancies and needs the Agency to understand that, while they are being filled, we need to have patience with them. In the interim, please route all requests through William. Additionally, William asks that Personnel be engaged in all agency issues to encourage their role within the agency and reduce turnover. William will be working on a better flow for all Personnel issues within the next few weeks.
 - BJ Bishop and Jessica Gray will be invited to address the CORE leadership team within the next few weeks to talk about the improvements and procedures flowing from the Personnel Department, such as building in more flexibility in registers.
 - William also expressed a need to look at which individuals have signatory power for the Commissioner.
- Information Support, Michael Price
 - It is important that the agency begin folding all external functions such as FHACP into TNKids to improve the functionality of the system. We have to determine if we want to leave the priorities as they are, or revisit those issues.
 - Elizabeth Black wants to set up a meeting around foster board rates and the improvements needed in the system. We need to develop a marketing plan around the rate change.
 - IS is working on getting an understanding of the front line work. They have to identify the soft spots so that can clean the IS system to work better for the Agency.
- Government Operations Tour of DCS, Andrea Turner
 - The tentative agenda for the Government Operations Tour have been set up. Thelma Harper has asked to have members of the Commissioner's office to tour with the Committee. They want to hit strategic areas of the state. This is an outgrowth of the meeting with the Government Operations Committee. We need to be aware of the impact that this will have.
 - Commissioner Miller stated that we need to realize that we may have Targeted Case management dollars negotiated away from us due to our mistakes. This is our time to put our best foot forward and start highlighting our best efforts through local offices. This trip needs to be peopled and managed appropriately.
- Commissioner Miller stated that our Case managers are doing far too much transportation and that we need to begin to impose upon the foster parents to perform this task.
- Regional implementation Plans, Elizabeth Black
 - The central office Regional liaisons need to review read the feedback on the Plans and begin working with their Regions. There is a schedule attached to the handout. Regional liaisons should be paying attention to the roll out of these

plans. Reviews of these plans will be conducted via conference call from Judy Cole's office. Anyone on the CORE leadership team who needs assistance in understanding either the plans or the process should talk with Frank Mix, who has a wonderful grasp on all the Plans.

- Debra Valentine
 - Reviewed the list of concerns from the monitoring offices.
 - There are questions around Provider Policy, which will cause problems for monitoring.
 - Also, we have to get program people to identify what they want monitored and how they want the issues addressed. Additionally, we need to know who controls the contracting issues.
 - Debra suggested a pre-meeting with the group to get to an “as is” and “to be” list in order to get everyone on the same page. Randal has agreed to be the point person on this issue.

Continuous Quality Improvement

Submitted by Daryl Chansuthus, Director of CQI

At some time or another, most of us have been a member of a ‘great team.’ It might have been in sports, or the performing arts, or perhaps in our work. Regardless of the setting, we probably remember the trust, the relationships, the acceptance, the synergy—and the results that we achieved, but we often forget that great teams rarely start off as great. Usually, they start off as a group of individuals. It takes time to develop the knowledge of working as a whole, just as it takes time to develop knowledge of walking or riding a bicycle. Once the team achieves synergy, the benefits to the organization and the individual are tremendous. As we start up our CQI teams throughout the state, some key skills and capabilities we can expect to gain and/or enhance as we move from “groups of individuals” to “great” teams include:

- ▶ **Aspiration:** the capacity of individuals, teams, and eventually the organization to orient themselves toward what they truly care about, and to change because they want to, not just because they need to or have been told to do so.
- ▶ **Reflection and Conversation:** the capacity to reflect on deep assumptions and patterns of behavior, both individually and collectively, and to have open and honest conversation about them.
- ▶ **Conceptualization:** the capacity to see larger systems and forces at play and to construct public, testable ways of expressing these views. (*Adapted from The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*)

As CQI teams form throughout the State, we must actively cultivate these skills and capabilities in each other and ourselves and regularly “test” our progress so that we can keep track of our evolution from simple workgroup to great team.

Andrea Walks for Tennessee's Children

When Tennessee First Lady Andrea Conte walked the Jackson leg of her 600-mile "Andrea Walks for Tennessee's Children" on Sept. 14, among the crowd of about 100 people who accompanied her was a Department of Children's Services case manager from Somerville.



Chuck Warzyn, foster parent support case manager for Fayette County, joined in the walk along a 12-mile route from the Madison County Child Advocacy Center in downtown Jackson to a rural church east of Jackson that was that day's ending point.

"These walks provide an excellent opportunity to express concern for children," Chuck said. "Joining Miss Andrea was a way to show support for the critical work taking place at the state's child advocacy centers.

"This was a well-organized walk with plenty of traffic control, security, and stops with water and light refreshments every three or four miles. Every stop also had restrooms available, which was much appreciated by an old man such as myself," Chuck concluded.

Child abuse statistics demonstrate the importance of "Andrea Walks". In 2003, almost 12,000 children in Tennessee were victims of some sort of abuse, including 2,200 who were sexually abused.

Have you walked with First Lady Andrea Conte? If so, we want to know about it! Please e-mail andrea.turner@state.tn.us with details.

Bulletin Board

Call for Recipes

The Keith Bulluck Believe & Achieve Foundation was established in the spring of 2002 to level the playing for children in the Tennessee foster care system and help them reach their goals. One of the many notable things Keith has done for DCS is to personally donate approximately 300 tickets to Tennessee Titans pre-season and regular season home games. As many of you know, Keith was a part of the New York foster care system.

The Foundation has several events scheduled throughout fall 2004 and spring 2005. All of these events are planned to benefit children associated with DCS, The Agape Center, and other programs that support foster children. The Foundation's upcoming activity is the development of a cookbook with recipes from employees of partner organizations, and DCS employees are being asked to contribute favorite recipes. The proceeds for the sale of cookbooks will benefit children in Middle Tennessee. The organization's goal is to raise enough money to take 100 kids to Build A Bear; to purchase winter coats and clothes for children associated with foster care program; to donate turkeys during the holidays; and to provide prom dresses to underprivileged high school girls. E-mail your recipes to Foundation Executive Director Scharlene White at scharlene.white@worldnet.att.net. Mail your recipes to: The Keith Bulluck Believe & Achieve Foundation, PO Box 1827, Brentwood, TN 37024.

For more information on Keith Bulluck and his Foundation, log on to his Web site at www.keithbulluckfanclub.com.



Do all the good you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

- John Wesley

If you expect someone else to guide you, you'll be lost.

- James Earl Jones

The ideal man bears the accidents of life with dignity and grace.

- Aristotle

There are three kinds of people in the world: those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who wonder what happened.

- Unknown

You cannot fix what you will not face.

- James Baldwin

Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.

- Will Rogers

Advice is what we ask for when we already know what the answer is, but wish we didn't.

- Erica Jong
